b. receiving the signal upon its return from the at least one computer; and

c. forming a profile characterizing the at least one computer based on information provided by the signal.

3. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises a round trip time measure taken by the signal during its travel to and from the at least one computer.

4. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises information on a number of files contained within the at least one computer.

5. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises information on an amount of content available to the network on the at least one computer.

6. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises information on the at least one computer's capability to process a search query.

7. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises information on a number of connected computers encountered by the signal during its travel to and from the at least one computer.

8. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises information on a number of additional computers connected to the at least one computer.

9. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises information on a frequency with which the plurality of computers are connected to the network.

10. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein the profile further comprises information on which of the plurality of computers are currently connected to the network.

11. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

a. collecting a plurality of statistical measures which characterize each of the

plurality of computers;

b. assigning a weighted score to each statistical measure for each of the plurality of computers;

c. combining the weighted scores to obtain a rank for each of the plurality of computers; and

d. ranking the plurality of computers according to the weighted scores.

12. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting data about a plurality of computers within the network further comprises monitoring data exchanges between the plurality of computers.

13. (Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the collected data in a memory, wherein at least a portion of the collected data is content data which includes information on the content data available for searching on the plurality of computers.

14. (Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising:

a. removing the content data after a predetermined period of time;

b. sending a common user search query into the network on a periodic basis; and

c. storing a result of the common user search query in the memory.

15. (Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising storing a portion of the content data based on previous user requests.

16. (Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising monitoring a current connectivity status of each of the plurality of computers.

17. (Amended) The method of claim 16, further comprising:

a. collecting a plurality of statistical measures which characterize each of the

plurality of computers;

b. assigning a weighted score to each statistical measure for each of the plurality of computers;

c. combining the weighted scores to obtain a rank for each of the plurality of computers;

d. ranking the plurality of computers according to the weighted scores; and

e. selecting the selected computer based on the content data, the current connectivity status and the ranks.

18. (Amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising storing a portion of the content data which identifies a type of file available for searching on the plurality of computers, wherein the selected computer is selected based in part on the type of file.

19. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising selecting a second selected computer based on the collected data and routing the search query from the user to the second selected computer after a selective one of a predetermined period of time and a user request.

20. (Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein said sending a signal to at least one of the plurality of computers further comprises sending the signal to a plurality of geographical locations, wherein the geographical locations are selected based on their respective proximity to the user.

21. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting data about the plurality of computers within the network is performed periodically.

22. (Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said collecting data about a plurality of computers within the network further comprises:

a. collecting data about a predetermined number of the plurality of computers at a

first predetermined time interval;

b. ranking the computers based on the collected data;

c. retaining a set of hub computers which make up a predetermined percentage of the plurality of computers that are most highly ranked; and

d. collecting data about only the set of hub computers at a second predetermined time interval, wherein the second predetermined time interval is smaller than the first predetermined time interval.

23. (Amended) A system by which a user may establish an optimal connection to a peer-to-peer computer network, comprising:

a. a monitor for measuring data about a plurality of computers within the network; and

b. a selector for selecting at least one of the plurality of computers to be a selected computer, based on the measured data, and which outputs a network location of the selected computer to the user, to thereby allow the user to connect to the selected computer.

24. (Amended) The system of claim 23, wherein said monitor further comprises:

a. a profiler which collects the measured data by sending a signal to at least one of the plurality of computers and receiving the signal therefrom, to thereby form a profile of the at least one of the plurality of computers; and

b. a database which stores the data collected by the profiler.

25. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises a round trip time measure taken by the signal during its travel to and from the at least one computer.

26. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises information on a number of files contained within the at least one computer.

27. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises information

on an amount of content available to the network on the at least one computer.

28. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises information of the at least one computer's capability to process a search query.

29. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises information on a number of connected computers encountered by the signal during its travel to and from the at least one computer.

30. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises information on a number of additional computers connected to the at least one computer.

31. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises information on a frequency with which the at least one computer is connected to the network.

32. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profile further comprises information on which of the plurality of computers are currently connected to the network.

33. (Amended) The system of claim 23, wherein the monitor is a computer within the network, and further wherein at least a portion of the measured data is collected by monitoring data exchanges in the network.

34. (Amended) The system of claim 23, further comprising a memory for collecting the measured data wherein the measured data includes information on content available for searching on the plurality of computers.

35. (Amended) The system of claim 34, wherein the memory removes the content data after a predetermined period of time, further wherein the memory sends common user search queries into the network on a periodic basis and stores the results.

36. (Amended) The system of claim 35, wherein a portion of the removed content data identifies a type of file available for searching on the plurality of computers, the portion being separately stored, further wherein the selected computer is selected based at least on the type of file.

37. (Amended) The system of claim 34, wherein the memory stores a portion of the content data based on previous user requests.

38. (Amended) The system of claim 23, wherein the monitor determines a current connectivity status for each of the plurality of computers, wherein the selected computer is selected based on the content data and the current connectivity status.

39. (Cancelled)

40. (Amended) The system of claim 23, wherein the selector selects a second selected computer based on the data, further wherein the selector outputs a network location of the second selected computer to the user after a selective one of a predetermined period of time and a response to a user request.

41. (Amended) The system of claim 24, wherein the profilers are located at a plurality of geographical locations which are remote from one another, wherein the geographical locations are selected based on their respective proximity to a user.

44. (Amended) The system of claim 23, wherein the host monitor collects data about a predetermined number of the plurality of computers at a first predetermined time interval, the host selector ranking the computers accordingly, and retaining a set of hub computers which make up a predetermined percentage of the plurality of computers which are most highly-ranked,

and thereafter collects data about only the set of hub computers at a second predetermined time interval, wherein the second predetermined time interval is smaller than the first predetermined time interval.

45. (Amended) A computer program for enabling a computer system to optimally couple to a peer-to-peer computer network, said computer program product utilizing a computer usable medium having computer readable program code, said computer readable program code comprising:

a. means for collecting data about a plurality of computers within the network, including a network location of each of the plurality of computers;

b. means for selecting at least one computer to be a selected computer, based on the collected data; and

c. means for routing search queries from the computer system to the selected computer via the network location of the selected computer.

46. (Amended) The computer program of claim 45, wherein said means for collecting data about a plurality of computers within the network further comprises:

a. means for sending a signal to at least one of the plurality of computers;

b. means for receiving the signal upon its return from the at least one computer; and

c. means for forming a profile characterizing the at least one computer, based on information provided by the signal.

47. (Amended) The computer program of claim 45, further comprising:

a. means for collecting a plurality of statistical measures which characterize each of the plurality of computers;

b. means for assigning a weighted score to each statistical measure for each of the plurality of computers;

c. means for combining the weighted scores to obtain a rank for each of the plurality

of computers; and

d. means for ranking the plurality of computers according to the weighted scores.

48. (Amended) The computer program of claim 45 further comprising means for monitoring data exchanges between the plurality of computers.

49. (Amended) The computer program of claim 48, further comprising:
means for storing the collected data in a memory, wherein at least a portion of the collected data is content data which includes information on content available for searching on the plurality of computers.

50. (Amended) The computer program of claim 49, further comprising:

a. means for removing the content data after a predetermined period of time;

b. means for sending a common user search query on a periodic basis; and

c. means for storing a result of the common user search query in the memory.

51. (Amended) The computer program of claim 49, wherein said means for storing stores a portion of the content data based on previous user requests.

52. (Amended) The computer program of claim 49further comprising means for monitoring a current connectivity status of each of the plurality of computers, wherein the selected computer is selected based on the content data and the current connectivity status.

53. (Amended) The computer program of claim 45 further comprising:

a. means for collecting a plurality of statistical measures for each of the plurality of computers;

b. means for assigning a weighted score to each statistical measure for each of the plurality of computers;

c. means for combining the weighted scores to obtain a rank for each of the plurality of computers;

d. means for ranking the plurality of computers according to the weighted scores, thereby producing a rank of each computer in the plurality; and

e. means for selecting the at least one computer based on the content data, the current connectivity status and the rank.

54. (Amended) The computer program of claim 45, further comprising means for sending the signal to a plurality of geographical locations which are remote from one another, wherein the geographical locations are selected based on their respective proximity to a user.

55. (Amended) A method for optimizing a computer's access to information, the method comprising:

a. maintaining a first database which includes status information about a plurality of computers within a network;

b. maintaining a second database which includes content information about the plurality of computers within the network;

c. filtering the content information in second database using the status information of the first database, at a time of a user request for information; and

d. accessing at least one computer within the network based on the filtered contents of the second database.

56. (Amended) The method of claim 55 further comprising updating the status information periodically, so that the status information is current.

57. (Amended) The method of claim 5further comprising intercepting exchanges between the plurality of computers within the network.

58. (Amended) The method of claim 55, wherein said filtering the contents of the second database using the contents of the first database further comprises:

a. identifying computers in the network (identified computers) which are least likely to provide information desired by the user, based on the status information; and

b. removing the content information from the second database which is stored on the identified computers.

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59. (Amended) The method of claim 58, wherein the status information includes a frequency with which the identified computers are connected to the network.

60. (Amended) The method of claim 58, wherein the status information includes a current connectivity status of the identified computers.

61. (Amended) The method of claim 57, wherein the status information includes a download capability measurement of the identified computers.

62. (Amended) The method of claim 55, further comprising:

a. maintaining a third database which includes content information about the computers within the network wherein the third database identifies the types of files available for searching on the plurality of computers within the network;

b. filtering the content information of the third database using the content information of the first database, at a time of a user request for information; and

c. accessing at least one computer within the network based on the filtered contents of the third database.

63. (New) The system of claim 34, further comprising:

a. means for collecting a plurality of statistical measures for each of the plurality of computers;

b. means for assigning a weighted score to each of the statistical measures; and

c. means for ranking the plurality of computers based on at least one of the weighted scores for each of the statistical measures.

64. (New) A system for searching a peer to peer network based on a search query comprising:

a. means for collecting data about a plurality of computers within the network;

b. means for selecting a selected computer of the plurality based on the collected data; and

c. means for routing the search query to the selected computer, wherein the selected computer provides relevant information to the search query.